Training, education: teaching and learning, towards the learning society, implementation of the White Paper

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PURPOSE : to report on the implementation of the White Paper "Teaching and Learning - Towards the learning society". CONTENT : the aim of this report is to describe the experimental, action and study phase implementing the five objectives which were laid down in November 1995 in the Commission's White Paper "Teaching and Learning - towards the learning society": - objective I: encourage the acquisition of new knowledge; - objective II: bring schools and the business sector closer together; - objective III: combat exclusion; - objective IV: proficiency in three Community languages; - objective V: treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis. Following its adoption, the European Commission initiated a broad debate on the subjects covered by the White Paper. The various Community institutions - the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions likewise debated the problems raised by the White Paper. The Commission took stock of all these discussions, in 1997, in a Communication entitled "Review of the reactions to the White Paper - teaching and learning : towards the learning society". The various Community institutions and bodies, the Member States, the social partners, higher education and research institutions and NGOs have all made contributions leading up to the series of experiments conducted under the various existing action programmes in the areas of education, training and youth. This is not the place to conduct full-scale final assessment of the way the five objectives have been implemented, since many of the measures are still in progress, according to the Commission. However, after a review of the contribution of the White Paper has made to the concept of a Europe of knowledge (Chapter I), it is nonetheless possible to take stock, at the end of 1999, of what has been done (Chapter II) and evaluate the methodological input in relation to innovative measures conducted on the initiative of the Community institutions and bodies in conjunction with the Member States (Chapter III). In conclusion, it is clear that some progress has been made in implementing the White Paper. Innovative experiments and activities have made a very active contribution to creating a Europe of knowledge. The Commission, in conjunction with the Member States, will continue to think about and discuss the matter based on studies, seminars and expert's reports. Symposia will be organised at the appropriate times to take stock of the experimental phase and to continue discussions with the Member States on the relative merits of the various experiments. Provision has been made in the second phase of the Leonardo da Vinci and the Socrates programmes and in the new Youth Programmes to introduce new (formal and informal) education and training schemes to facilitate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by all groups in European society. Further innovative programmes are based on the same approach, such as "Flexible University" and "School of Tomorrow" funded under the RTD programme "Information Society Technologies". The decision promoting work-linked training schemes has been adopted; further legal instruments are planned or are already at the decision-making stage. The Commission has thus used documents like the White Paper as a basis for promoting and prioritising innovation. The people of Europe have to be perpetual innovators. The Commission will support them in their drive for innovation. It is in the field of knowledge and skills that the battle for the future will be fought and won.